

The Sun.

BOOKS AND THE BOOK WORLD

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SPRING IS COME UPON US.

By Mary Carolyn Davies.

SPRING is come upon us, and has pierced our hearts with pain;

Spring, the breaker of hearts, and Spring, the mender;

Spring is come upon us with her sword and spear again,

And once again, as ever, we surrender.

Spring is come upon us, and our old time griefs are flaunting

Like flags that she has captured in the wars we fought before;

She touches with a little sword the old wounds of our wanting,

Of our yearning—they are burning, the forgotten wounds, once more.

Spring is come upon us to cut and wound and back—

We weep now for the heartbreak we have spent the years concealing.

There is sobbing in the nighttime, now that Spring's come back.

But, ah! the hand that hurts us will as surely bring us healing.

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WHAT EVERY PUBLISHER KNOWS.

THE one thing that every publisher knows, so far as an humble experience can deduce, is that what is called "general" publishing—meaning fiction and other books of general appeal—is a highly speculative enterprise and hardly a business at all. The clearest analogy seems to be with the theatrical business. Producing books and producing plays is terrifyingly alike. Full of risks. Requiring, unless genius is manifested, considerable money capital. Likely to make, and far more likely to lose, small fortunes overnight. . . . Fatally fascinating. More an art than an organization, but usually requiring an organization for the exhibition of the most brilliant art—like opera. A habit comparable with hasheesh. Heart lifting—and head-achy. 'Twas the night before publication and all through the house not a creature was stirring not even a stenographer. The day dawned bright and clear and a reorder for fifty more copies came in the afternoon mail. . . . Absentmindedly, the publisher-bridegroom pulled a contract instead of the wedding ring from his pocket. "With this royalty I thee wed," he murmured. And so she was published and they lived happily ever after until she left him because he did not clothe the children suitably, using green cloth with purple stamping.

The Tenth Book.

A fine old publishing house once went back over the record of about 1,200 published books. This was a rather conservative firm, as little of a gambler as possible; its books had placed it, in every respect, in the first rank of publishing houses.

Of the 1,200 books just one in ten had made any sizable amount of money. The remaining 1,080 had either lost money, broken even, or made sums smaller than the interest on the money tied up in them. Most of the 120 profitable books had been highly profitable; it will not surprise you to learn this when you reflect that these lucrative books had each to foot the bill, more or less, for nine others. So much for the analysis of figures. But what lay behind the figures? In some cases it was possible to tell why a particular book had sold. More often it wasn't. . . . Is this a business?

Mr. Jenkinson's Novel.

THORWALD ALEMBERT JENKINSON has a book published. It's not a bad book, either; very good novel, as a matter of fact. Sales rather poor. Mr. JENKINSON's publisher takes his next book with a natural reluctance, buoyed up by the certitude that this is a better story and has in it elements that promise popularity. The publisher's salesman goes on the road. In Dodge City, Iowa, let us say, he enters a bookseller's and begins to talk the new Jenkinson novel. At the sound of his voice and the sight of the dummy the bookseller lifts repelling hands and backs away in horror.

"Stock that?" asks the bookseller rhetorically. "Not on your life! Why," with a gesture toward one shelf, "there's his first book. Twenty copies and only two sold!"

The new Jenkinson novel has a wretched advance sale. Readers, not seeing it in the bookshops, may yet call for it when they read a review—not necessarily a favorable account—or when they see it advertised. If Mr. JENKINSON wrote histories or

biographies the bookseller's wholly human attitude would not much matter. But a novel is different. The customer wanting JENKINSON'S *History of France* would order it or go elsewhere, most likely. The customer wanting JENKINSON'S new novel is quite often content with TARKINGTON'S instead.

When you go to the ticket agency to get seats at a Broadway show and find they have none left for *Whoop 'er Up* you grumble, and then buy seats at *Let's All Go*. Not that you really care. Not that any one really cares. The man who produced *Whoop 'er Up* is also the producer of *Let's All Go*, the two theatres are owned by a single group, the librettists are one and the same and the music of both is equally bad, proceeding from an identical source. Even the stage hands work interchangeably on a strict union scale. But Mr. JENKINSON did not write TARKINGTON'S novel, the books are published by firms that have not a dollar in common, and only the bookseller can preserve an evatanguayan indifference over your choice.

Pages 1-20, Punch!

The publisher's salesman comes to the bookseller's lair equipped with dummies. These show the book's exterior, its size, thickness, paper, binding and (very important) its jacket. Within the dummy are blank pages, or perhaps the first twenty pages of the book printed over and over to give the volume requisite thickness. The bookseller may read these twenty pages. If the author has got plenty of action into them the bookseller is favorably impressed. Mainly he depends for his idea of the book upon what the salesman and the publisher's catalogue tell him. He has to. He can't read 'em all.

In his interesting article on *The Publishing Business*, appearing in 1916 in the *Publishers' Weekly* and since reprinted as a booklet, TEMPLE SCOTT cites HENRI BERGSON'S *Creative Evolution* as a modern instance of a special sort of book finding its own very special, but surprisingly large, public. "Nine booksellers out of ten 'passed' it when the traveller brought it round," observes Mr. SCOTT. "Fortunately, for the publisher, the press acted the part of the expert, and public attention was secured." Was the bookseller to blame? Most decidedly not. *Creative Evolution* is nothing to tie up your money in on a dim chance that somewhere an enthusiastic audience waits for the Bergsonian gospel.

Mr. SCOTT'S article, which is inconclusive, in our opinion, points out clearly that as no two books are like each other no two books are really the same article. Much fiction, to be sure, is of a single stamp; many books, and here we are by no means limited to fiction, have whatever unity comes from the authorship of a single hand. This unity may exist, elusively, as in the stories of JOSEPH CONRAD, or may be confined almost wholly to the presence of the same name on two title pages, as in the fact that *The Virginian* and *The Pentecost of Calamity* are both the work of OWEN WISTER.

No! Two books are most often and emphatically not the same article. Mr. SCOTT is wholly right when he points out every book should have advertising, or other attention, peculiar to itself. A method of reporting one book will not do for another, any more than a publisher's circular describing one book will do to describe a second. The art of reporting books or other news, like the art of advertising books or other commodities, is one of endless differentiation. In the absence of real originality, freshness and ideas, both objects go unachieved or else are achieved by speciousness, not to say guile. You, for example, do not really believe that by reading HANNIBAL HALCOMBE'S *How to Heap Up Happiness* you will be able to acquire the equivalent of a college education in fifty-two weeks. But somewhere in *How to Heap Up Happiness* Mr. HALCOMBE tells how he made money or how he learned to enjoy pictures on magazine covers or a happy solution of his unoriginal domestic troubles—any one of which you may crave to know and honest information of which will probably send you after the book.

THE ANCIENT KINGS.

By David Morton.

THEY can but grieve—the kings of ancient time,

On whose broad brows the certain seal was set,

The kingly stamp that keeps them regal yet, And greatly gestured still in tale and rhyme.

How shall they watch this sorry pantomime Of kings unseparated, quaking as they flee,

Forgetful of the purple that should be Magnificent—in virtue or in crime?

These have dishonored all the kings of earth:

Their brief, abandoned crowns are on the floor Of throne rooms now despoiled forevermore,

Their courts for mockery and their names for mirth . . .

From such as these that laughing worlds despise

The ancient kings have turned away their eyes.

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The Librarian's Corner

CONDUCTED BY

FRANK PARKER STOCKBRIDGE.

MORE BOOKS FOR SOLDIERS!

AMERICAN soldiers overseas are still calling for books. Every public library in the United States is asking its public to give books for shipment to the A. E. F. The American Library Association is combing out the camp libraries on this side in the effort to obtain additional volumes for the men over there without impairing the usefulness of the libraries over here. From Washington the A. L. A. sends out an appeal for another half million volumes at once. That number is needed in addition to the quarter of a million or so that can be gathered up from accessible collections.

There never was anything like it. In a little under two years the soldiers of the United States Army have read—and in most cases have literally "read to pieces"—something like four million books, and they are still clamoring for reading matter. If we had not seen all of our preconceptions dissipated and every known precedent smashed in the course of America's war activities we might take time to marvel at this unprecedented fact. But it is merely another one of the things that could not happen but that did happen.

Miscellany, Please.

There is nobody to-day, not even the most pessimistic and conservative librarian, who still believes that ordinary, average American young men do not read. Close to half of the men of the A. E. F. have come back home, but here comes a cable from Burton E. Stevenson, in charge of Library War Service in Europe: "Demand for books unbelievably great and supply inadequate. Rush all possible fiction and miscellaneous shipments." And here is an extract from one of his recent letters:

"The demand for miscellaneous books was never as great as it is now. I thoroughly trust that you will continue to make the appeal in the larger cities of the United States and try to get it through in some way to the people that the men over here need books more now than they ever have. It will be at least six months, perhaps a year, before we shall dare to slacken our efforts in this respect."

This is the sort of letters the Paris headquarters of the A. L. A. is getting—this from a soldier of the Army of Occupation, writing from Pommern, Germany:

"DEAR FRIEND.

"Could you send some reading to a couple of Yanks in Germany, where it's impossible to get any reading at all? If you can't we are all going 'bugs.' A couple of magazines or something of the sort that we could read and pass along to the rest of the boys—any good, live stories at all would do.

"Hoping you can help us out and thanking you in advance, I am, respectfully yours,

"HARRY A. CONBOY,

"Med. Dept. 58th U. S. Inf., A. E. F."

From Vladivostok.

The call for books comes from our men all the way from the west of Europe to the east of Asia. In the same mail with the report that the Paris book market was being scoured for works in English for the embarkation camp at Brest comes a letter from Professor Harry Clemons, in charge of Library War Service at Vladivostok:

"To a 'garage detachment' in the country near by I sent a case flavored with works on gasoline engines, automobile guides and Williamson stories. The Lieutenant in charge came in early the next morning and said he and his men had been almost fighting for the technical books on their subject. He said if we had books like that he wanted something on refrigeration. He got it." The library at Vladivostok, Professor Clemons reports, is unique in one respect. When he asked the army authorities for an assistant in his central library he was assigned a German prisoner! "He uses English well, has a very good education and an astonishing knowledge of books and appears to be an accurate and hard worker," writes Professor Clemons, whose peacetime job is professor of English at the University of Nanking; he adds, "with a library in China presided over by a Chinese, with a Korean as one of the chief assistants, and a library in Siberia, with a German assistant, oughtn't I to qualify for a Library League of Nations?"

We will be sending books to Vladivostok as well as to France for a long time to come. If every American who owns a single book that he does not really need would turn it in at his public library to be sent to our army overseas the demand might soon be supplied.